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RESIST



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A CALL TO RESIST ILLEGITIMATE AUTHORITY

March-April 2010

A Stronger Movement for Immigrant Rights

In the struggle for immigrant justice, the central crisis is one of human rights

A version of this article originally appeared on Organizing Upgrade, www.organizingupgrade.com.

By Aarti Shahani

The minority is about to become the majority in the United States. This fact is seen and feared by the Right, particularly White nationalists. Meanwhile neoliberalism—specifically the contradiction of free capital and closed borders—is giving us border walls, cheap “illegal” labor and a new cash crop for the super-sized prison industry: immigrants.

Immigrants are the fastest growing segment of the US prison population. In 2003, all immigration functions were inserted into the newly formed Department of Homeland Security. Immigration authority has passed through many hands, from the Department of Treasury to Labor to Justice. Today, for the first time in US history, we are structurally treating immigration as a security threat to be solved by police and prison.

You can see this shift as a radical break with how the United States has historically managed migration, or as a continuation of how the US relies on the criminal justice system. Immigration is the latest field where our society is, in the words of scholar Jonathan Simon, “governing through crime.”

Recently I co-authored “Local Democracy on ICE,” a study on a tiny law that, for the first time in American history, allows federal executives to extend to local community-based agencies the

extraordinary arrest and incarceration powers originally carved out for immigration police stationed at the borders. This devolution—shifting immigration enforcement from federal to local hands—is a right-wing strategy on immigration to make sure that the border follows illegals into every street of the interior by turning teachers, nurses, librarians and landlords into *La Migra* (a term used within Spanish-speaking communities to refer to immigration enforcement agents).

The first step of the devolution strategy is to turn cops, jailers and court officers into deportation agents. Its success is reflected in the words of *New York Times* reporter Julia Preston, “The country is polarized between those who want a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants and those who want to deport them. But just about everyone agrees that the doubly illegal, immigrants with no documents and who have committed crimes, are not welcome.”



“Nuestro Labor” by Favianna Rodriguez, www.favianna.com

President Barack Obama’s pick to head Homeland Security agrees. Janet Napolitano is the Democrat’s leading hawk on immigration. She is a prosecutor who embraces devolution through

continued on page eight

INSIDE:

Dreamwalkers / p. 2 • Jean Montrevil / p. 5 • Remembering Zinn / p. 6 • Resources / p. 8 • Meet RESIST Grantees / p. 12

The Dreamwalkers

Ever walked a mile in an undocumented student's shoes? How about 1,500 miles?

On January 1, four young people set out on an incredible, 1,500-mile journey they're calling "The Trail of Dreams." Calling for just and humane immigration reform, these four walkers are in a unique position: they were brought to the US as children.

Juan Rodriguez is the only walker who has documented status. Federal immigration agents raided Gaby Pacheco's home four years ago, and her family is fighting deportation back to a country she left when she was seven years old. Felipe Matos had to give up his dream of attending Duke University, where he was accepted, because of his undocumented status. Carlos, interviewed below, has lived in the US since he was two years old.

These four "dreamwalkers" are currently over halfway through their journey of 1,500 miles from Miami to Washington, DC. They are walking to share their stories, hoping that everyday people can understand better what it is like to be in their shoes, with no pathway to legalization, citizenship or even in-state tuition. They write, "Our journey will be long and full of hardship, but for us, we see no other option. We are putting our futures in jeopardy because our present is unbearable."

RESIST interviewed dreamwalker Carlos Roa, 22, when the group was about 50 miles from Atlanta, Georgia.

RESIST: You and the other walkers have been on the road for over two months. How is the walk going?

CARLOS ROA (CR): We have been on the road since January 1. It's a lifestyle to adapt to. The walk has exceeded my expectations in the sense that we've really been able to reach out to folks and see what's going on in some of these areas. I really wasn't aware of all the other struggles that some of our communities were facing, even though being an activist, I was aware of what was going on nationally. It's different when you actually see it and hear about it from people's own voices.

RESIST: Deciding to walk 1,500 miles seems like a pretty drastic choice to make.

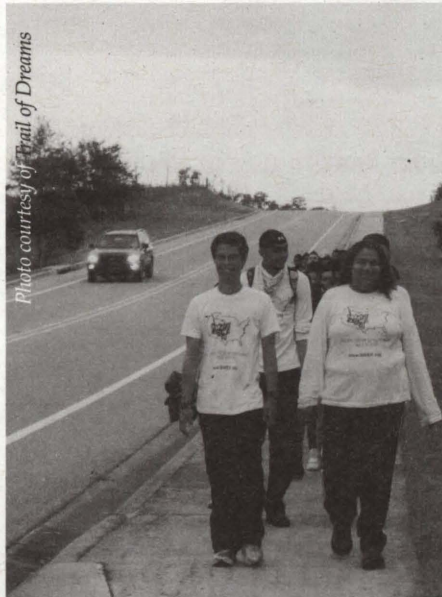


Photo courtesy of Trail of Dreams
Juan Rodriguez, Carlos Roa, Felipe Matos and Gaby Pacheco began a 1,500 mile journey on January 1, walking from Miami to Washington, DC to call for immigration reform.

Of all the options out there for working for immigration reform, why are you all walking? What inspired this choice?

CR: That's a really broad question. We've been doing this work for a couple years now—Juan, Felipe and myself. We all started in SWER, Students Working for Equal Rights, because we were not only being affected by the [immigration] issue but we wanted to do something about it. Two years ago the DREAM Act was getting reintroduced and there was a possibility of it getting passed. Unfortunately it failed with the Congress. [The Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors Act, introduced in Congress in 2009, would provide certain undocumented immigrant students who graduate from US high schools, arrived in the US as minors and have been in the country for at least five years prior to the bill's enactment the opportunity to earn conditional permanent residency.]

The reason we decided to walk was because we wanted folks to hear our voices and to give a face to the issue. It was out of wanting to do something about our situation, to not just sit idly by while things continued to get worse.

RESIST: What kinds of things had you tried before?

CR: Within SWER we've basically done it all. We've done conference calls, national meetings, media, protests outside detention centers, organizing on our college campuses. We've done so much. Yet besides halting student deportations, we really weren't seeing any [policy] change. If anything, we were seeing things get worse.

There was one protest shortly before the idea of the walk arose, where we were outside a detention center, the

continued on page three



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The Dreamwalkers

continued from page two

Broward Transitional Center in Miami. Even though the protest was a successful event from our organizational perspective—we had over 100 undocumented and documented students there—what we noticed was that inside the detention center, there was construction. They were expanding the center. That, for us, was really demoralizing and frustrating.

It was a couple days after that protest when we were telling ourselves, “We can’t continue on like this. We need to do something.” And that’s when the idea of the walk arose. From my perspective, it was a brilliant idea. I thought, “Wow, that’s exactly what we need. That’s brilliant. Most people would say it’s crazy.”

RESIST: How do you see the Trail of Dreams fitting in with movements for immigrant justice, with movements in small communities around the country and with a larger movement for immigrant rights?

CR: I think it’s one of many catalysts that will spark a national movement concerning immigrant rights. I feel as if the walk has brought about attention to a lot of the American public who doesn’t fully comprehend our situation as immigrants and who doesn’t understand the complexities of the immigration

system and some of the injustices that are occurring. They don’t understand things as simple as the fact that we’ve graduated from high school here, that in some cases we’ve been raised here our entire lives and that all we want to do is get legalized and have a pathway to citizenship in this country.

CORRECTION: RESIST regrets an error in our January/February 2010 Newsletter. A caption on page 2 identified the Massachusetts Alliance of HUD Tenants as a RESIST grantee. While RESIST values our relationship with the Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants, the organization is not a RESIST grantee.

People are changing their views [about] immigrants when they hear our voices.

At times they’re completely shocked that some of these injustices are occurring. We’re demystifying a lot of the things that demean and criminalize immigrants.



Juan Rodriguez, Carlos Roa, Felipe Matos and Gaby Pacheco (l-r) were each brought to the US as children and have undertaken their journey to call for just and humane immigration reform.

And I think that to an extent we’ve been able to do that throughout some of these areas. People are changing their views [about] immigrants when they hear our voices. At times they’re completely shocked that some of these injustices are occurring; we are exposing a lot of the hatred and the misconceptions. We’re demystifying a lot of the things

that demean and criminalize immigrants.

RESIST: In February the KKK organized a rally to coincide with your presence in the southeastern region of Georgia, during which Klan Imperial Wizard Jeff Jones urged the crowd to wake up and “stop the Latino invasion now.” According to the *Florida Times-Union*, Jones spewed racial slurs and questioned the patriotism of Mexican-Americans.

CR: That is correct. We actually took a small detour to Nahunta, Georgia where the KKK [organized] the protest against immigrants. We went there not to confront them but to show that we are here and that we are not what they

say we are. We were there accompanied by the NAACP, and we sang songs of freedom like “We Shall Overcome.” It was an amazing experience being there in solidarity with others that have also gone through similar struggles of fighting against hatred and bigotry. We were there showing that we are only human, showing that we are all one people and that we have a love for humanity.

It wasn’t easy in the KKK rally. When we walked in there, [there were] confederate flags left and right. It was incredible, some of the things they were saying to agitate the crowd; they were calling us Mexican dogs. They went so far to say things so derogatory, how we’re taking their jobs and how we’re criminals. Really dehumanizing us. And we were *there*! That’s why it was really important for us to be there to show that, no, that’s erroneous. We’re only human and we’re good people. Even though you’re spewing ignorance and hatred, we still love you as humans. We have to love one another.

RESIST: Another of the walkers, Juan, wrote on the Trail of Dreams blog that the KKK organizers held the rally under the premise that “God put each race in their respective continent and they were meant to stay there.” Juan wondered if

continued on page four

The Dreamwalkers

continued from page three

the KKK organizers thought God had put the Europeans on the North American continent, or if they might be taking their message to heart and secretly organizing to return US land to Native Americans.

CR: You would think that, wouldn't you? This country was, to an extent, built by the contributions of immigrants, built on immigrant labor, going back generations. This is a forgotten history. [The KKK members] have a skewed view of history. Really, it's an amnesia. We want folks to remember.

RESIST: What you said about immigrant labor really ties into this long struggle in the immigrant rights movement of fighting perceptions around good versus bad immigrants. Particular immigrant groups have been brought to this country to do certain kinds of labor—for example, Chinese workers were brought in to build railroads—and these groups are presented as useful immigrants while they're doing the work. Then when the work is finished and they want to keep building their lives and stay in their new communities, they're suddenly less desirable.

CR: We're also seeing something that has happened throughout the history of this country and of others, that whenever there's a recession or an economic crisis, the first people that are blamed are usually those that are most ostracized or



Carlos, Felipe, Juan and Gaby have met with community groups throughout Florida, Georgia and South Carolina as they have made their way, step by step, towards the nation's capitol. Carlos reports they started out in tennis shoes but quickly made a switch to hiking boots.

most underprivileged in society. In this case [the current US economic recession] immigrants are the ones that are getting blamed for the economic crisis, when in reality it's big corporations that created the crisis in the first place.

RESIST: You and the other walkers on the Trail of Dreams are in your 20s. You all are students or were students not too long ago. I wonder, do you see your work as being cross-generational? Are you working with older immigrants and older immigrants' rights organizers as part of this process?

CR: Absolutely. [This work is] cross-generational, cross-ethnic, cross-gender. This is a people's movement that involves people from different walks of life, different backgrounds, different ethnicities, different races. I've met Native Americans, Caucasians, African Americans and Latinos who are supportive of this cause. This is a people's movement and what we want is to regain some of our humanity, some equality overall.

RESIST: You're doing this walk at much personal risk. First of all, there's a lot of physical hardship, walking 1,500 miles, and there's an economic hardship, the amount of time you're taking off from earning money or go-

ing to school. But you're also really putting yourselves and your legal status out there. What gives you hope? What keeps you going every day?

CR: I think what gives us hope is the goodwill of people we've met across the walk, hearing stories of people overcoming struggles and seeing how we're able to change the minds of some average Americans who never even knew what's going on. Some even want to become active within the movement. And in our own cases, seeing how we've been able to help one another and how our lives have significantly improved just by organizing ourselves and getting together. We know the importance of organizing and building relationships with one another in order for us to stay in community and live better overall.

RESIST: Besides reaching new communities and sharing your personal experiences, what do you want to see come out of this walk?

CR: We have two demands. The first one is, we want an immediate end to raids and deportations, specifically ones including DREAMers (DREAM Act students). The other is the passage of immigration reform, specifically ad-

continued on page five

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www.trail2010.org

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The Dreamwalkers

continued from page four

dress the DREAM Act. We want just and human immigration reform. The DREAM Act is part of that. Those are our two primary demands, and we're walking on four principles.

The first one is workers' rights. We want the government to no longer focus on going after or criminalizing undocumented workers, but instead, if they're going to focus on employment, focus on employers [who are] doing the hiring and are exploiting immigrant labor.

The second one is the end to the separation of families, which includes halting DREAM Act student deportations, and the third one is a path to legalization. That

would include a path to citizenship, which the DREAM Act incorporates.

The fourth is access to higher education. Right now it's really difficult when you're an undocumented student. You have to pay, a lot of times, out-of-state tuition and it's much more expensive. In my case, for example, I have to pay four times the amount of a student paying in-state tuition.

Those are our four principles. We want those two specific demands, and we want them addressed by May 1.

RESIST: When are you planning to make it to DC? What can people do who want to get involved in supporting your walk?

CR: We will arrive in DC on May 1. And we want thousands of people to

walk with us that day heading towards the capitol.

People can visit our website, www.trail2010.org, to find out how to help, see photos and videos, read our blog and donate. We really want to spread the word. We also have a text messaging service. Text the word "trail" to 30644 and you'll get all the updates along the trail. You won't get bombarded with texts, but you'll be able to follow with us along our trajectory.

Read the latest about Carlos Roa and the Trail of Dreams at www.trail2010.org. See box on page 4 for more information about how to stay up-to-date on the walk's progress. This interview was edited and condensed.

The Plight of Jean Montrevil

New York community activist and Haitian immigrant fights to keep his family together

Following the devastating earthquake that hit Haiti in January, the Department of Homeland Security temporarily suspended the deportations of Haitian immigrants. There is not yet a specified end to the suspension period, and the plight of Haitian immigrants has sparked renewed debate on immigration reform. One case in particular, that of Jean Montrevil, highlights injustices in the current US deportation system.

Jean Montrevil came to the United States from Haiti with his parents in 1986 as a legal permanent resident. At age 20 he was arrested on drug charges and served 11 years in prison. He was released in 2000 and opened a small shop in Brooklyn, determined to turn his life around.

According to a 1996 law, non-citizens convicted of felonies are subject to deportation. Since his release, Jean has been in a supervised program for deportable immigrants. He has not broken any laws and has complied with all requests from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the agency responsible for enforcing immigration laws under the Department of Homeland Security. Jean married Jani, a US-born woman, and has four children, all US citizens. He now owns and operates a small van service in Brooklyn.

Despite serving his time in prison and turning his life around, Jean was unexpectedly detained on December 30, 2009 during a routine ICE visit. He was scheduled to be deported one week before the January 12 earthquake that devastated Haiti, but the trip was postponed when one of the other deportees suddenly became ill.

Jean, a longtime community leader in New York City and active in a number of immigrant rights groups, including Families for Freedom, the New York City New Sanctuary Movement and Detention Watch Network, has received an outpouring of community support. In January, over a hundred people attended a rally outside the Varick Street Immigrant Detention Center, calling for immigration reform and Jean's release. That day, ten activists were arrested after stopping traffic to prevent vans from transporting new immigrant detainees to the center.

Jean is using his case to fight for more just immigration and deportation systems, especially for immigrant parents who are being deported without concern for the welfare of their children. Under the current system, immigration judges cannot consider the welfare of US-born children when deciding whether or not to deport a parent.

"Families across the United States are being destroyed every day because of immigration laws that are unjust and anti-famil[y]," said Jean in a statement. "The problem with immigration laws is that judges are not allowed to do what [they] are trained to do—to judge and make sure that everyone's best interest is taken into account."

Unfortunately, even the new Temporary Protected Status for Haitians that the Obama Administration enacted in late January does not apply to Jean because of inflexible immigration laws.

Jean was released from detention on January 23. He is, however, still facing deportation and must report monthly to Homeland Security. The US immigration system has broken down in handling Jean's case. Jean has been applying to ICE for the past three years for "deferred action"—the only discretion that ICE has under the law—to have his case put on the bottom of the stack so his still-pending deportation order will not be enforced. ICE has refused to grant this request. Jean and his lawyer continue to work to get his deportation orders overturned.

Kate O'Neill is a RESIST Intern and a recent graduate of Boston's Northeastern University. For more information about Jean Montrevil's case, visit www.newsanctuarynyc.org.



Jean and Jani Montrevil with two of their four children. They are fighting to keep their family together.

Remembering Howard Zinn

An inspiration to generations, he never backed down from fighting for justice

By Noam Chomsky

It is not easy for me to write a few words about Howard Zinn, the great American activist and historian who passed away in January. He was a very close friend for 45 years. The families were very close too. His wife Roz, who died of cancer not long before, was also a marvelous person and close friend. Also somber is the realization that a whole generation seems to be disappearing, including several other old friends: Edward Said, Eqbal Ahmed and others, who were not only astute scholars but also dedicated, courageous militants, always on call when needed—which was constant.

Howard's remarkable life and work are summarized best in his own words. His primary concern, he explained, was "the countless small actions of unknown people" that lie at the roots of "those great moments" that enter the historical

record—a record that will be profoundly misleading, and seriously disempowering, if it is torn from these roots as it passes through the filters of doctrine and dogma. His life was always closely intertwined with his writings and innumerable talks and interviews. It was devoted, selflessly, to empowerment of the unknown people who brought about great moments. That was true when he was an industrial worker and labor activist, and from the days, 50 years ago, when he was teaching at Spellman college in Atlanta, Georgia, a black college that was open mostly to the small black elite.

Roots of resistance

While teaching at Spellman, Howard supported the students who were at the cutting edge of the civil rights movement in its early and most dangerous days, many of whom became quite well-known in later years—Alice Walker, Julian Bond, and others—and who loved and revered him, as did everyone who knew him well. And as always, he did not just support them but also participated directly with them in their most hazardous efforts—no easy undertaking at that time, before there was any organized popular movement and in the face of government hostility that lasted for some years.

Finally, popular support was ignited, in large part by the courageous actions of the young people who were sitting in at lunch counters, riding freedom buses, organizing demonstrations, facing bitter racism and brutality, sometimes death. By the early 1960s a mass popular movement was taking shape, by then with Martin Luther King in a leadership role, and the government had to respond. As a reward for his courage and honesty, Howard was soon expelled from the college where he taught. A few years later he wrote the standard work

on SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), the major organization of those "unknown people" whose "countless small actions" played such an important part in creating the groundswell that enabled King to gain significant influence and to bring the country to honor the constitutional amendments of a century earlier that had theoretically granted elementary civil rights to former slaves—at least to do so partially; there's no need to stress that there remains a long way to go.

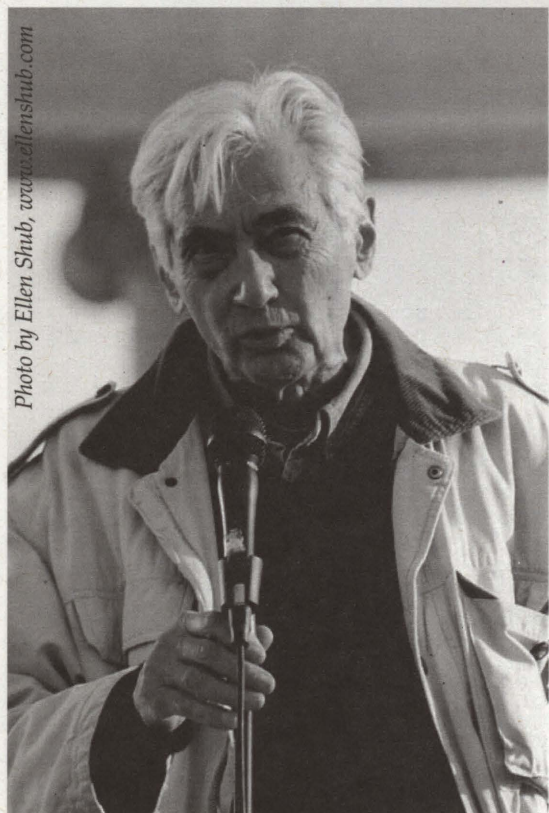
On a personal note, I came to know Howard well when we went together to a civil rights demonstration in Jackson, Mississippi in (I think) 1964. Even at that late date, Jackson was a scene of violent public antagonism, police brutality and even cooperation with state security forces on the part of federal authorities, sometimes in ways that were quite shocking.

Loved (and resented) on campus

After being expelled from the Atlanta college where he taught, Howard came to Boston and spent the rest of his academic career at Boston University, where he was, I am sure, the most admired and loved faculty member on campus, and the target of bitter antagonism and petty cruelty on the part of the administration—though in later years, after his retirement, he gained the public honor and respect that was always overwhelming among students, staff, much of the faculty and the general community.

While there, Howard wrote the books that brought him well-deserved fame. His book *Logic of Withdrawal*, published in 1967, was the first to express clearly and powerfully what many were then beginning barely to contemplate: that the US had no right even to call for a negotiated settlement in Vietnam, leaving Washington with power and substantial control in the country it had invaded and by then already largely destroyed. Rather, the US should do what any aggressor should: withdraw, allow the population to somehow reconstruct as they could from the

continued on page seven



Already in his eighties, Howard Zinn addresses the crowd at an April 2004 rally against the war in and occupation of Iraq on Boston Common in Massachusetts.



On May 7, 1985, several hundred people sat in and held a town meeting inside Boston's JFK Federal Building while 1,000 people marched outside. As part of the national Pledge of Resistance, the protesters called for an end to the funding of Nicaragua's Contras. Over 400 people, including Howard Zinn (center left, facing camera), were handcuffed and arrested that afternoon.

Remembering Howard Zinn

continued from page six

wreckage and, if minimal honesty could be attained, pay massive reparations for the crimes that the invading armies had committed. The book had wide influence among the public, although to this day its message can barely even be comprehended in elite educated circles, an indication of how much necessary work lies ahead.

Significantly, among the general public by the war's end, 70% regarded the war as "fundamentally wrong and immoral," not "a mistake," a remarkable figure considering the fact that scarcely a hint of such a thought was expressible in mainstream opinion. Howard's writings—and, as always, his prominent presence in protest and direct resistance—were a major factor in civilizing much of the country.

In those same years, Howard also became one of the most prominent supporters of the resistance movement that was then developing. He was one of the early signers of the Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority and was so close to the activities of RESIST that he was practically one of the organizers. He also took part at once in the

sanctuary actions that had a remarkable impact in galvanizing antiwar protest. Whatever was needed—talks, participation in civil disobedience, support for resisters, testimony at trials—Howard was always there.

A book for the generations

Even more influential in the long run than Howard's anti-war writings and actions was his enduring masterpiece, *A People's History of the United States*, a book that literally changed the consciousness of a generation. Here he developed with care, lucidity and comprehensive sweep his fundamental message about the crucial role of the people who remain unknown in carrying forward the endless struggle for peace and justice, and about the victims of the systems of power that create their own versions of history and seek to impose it. Later, his Voices of a People's History project, now an acclaimed theatrical and television production, has brought to many the actual words of those forgotten or ignored people who have played such a valuable role in creating a better world.

Howard's unique success in drawing the actions and voices of unknown

people from the depths to which they had largely been consigned has spawned extensive historical research following a similar path, focusing on critical periods of American history and turning to the record in other countries as well. It is not entirely novel—there had been scholarly inquiries of particular topics before—but nothing to compare with Howard's broad and incisive evocation of "history from below," compensating for critical omissions in how American history had been interpreted and conveyed.

Howard's dedicated activism continued, literally without a break, until the very end, even in his last years, when he was suffering from severe infirmity and personal loss, though one would hardly know it when meeting him or watching him speaking tirelessly to captivated audiences all over the country. Whenever there was a struggle for peace and justice, Howard was there, on the front lines, unflagging in his enthusiasm and inspiring in his integrity, engagement, eloquence and insight, light touch of humor in the face of adversity, dedication to nonviolence and sheer decency. It is hard even to imagine how many young people's lives were touched, and how deeply, by his achievements, both in his work and his life.

There are places where Howard's life and work should have particular resonance. One, which should be much better known, is Turkey. I know of no other country where leading writers, artists, journalists, academics and other intellectuals have compiled such an impressive record of bravery and integrity in condemning crimes of state and going beyond to engage in civil disobedience to try to bring oppression and violence to an end, facing and sometimes enduring severe repression, and then returning to the task. It is an honorable record and one that should be a model for others, just as Howard Zinn's life and work are an unforgettable model, sure to leave a permanent stamp on how history is understood and how a decent and honorable life should be lived.

Noam Chomsky is a founder of RESIST and a world-renowned political activist, linguist, author, philosopher, cognitive scientist and lecturer. Find his writings and more online at www.chomsky.info.

RESIST Grantees Working for Immigrant Justice

Below are some of the many RESIST grantees organizing for immigration rights and legislative reform. Please contact these organizations directly for more information about their work.

Amigos Multicultural Services Center. *Eugene, Oregon.* Promotes respect for the human rights of immigrants through activities that inform, organize and mobilize. www.amigosmsc.org

Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition. *Austin, Texas.* A coalition of immigrants, labor activists, students, interfaith and community organizations that organizes for immigrant rights. www.austinirc.org

Center for Immigrant Families. *New York, New York.* Low-income immigrant women who address the root causes of injustice and its impact on their lives. www.c4if.org

Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center. *Cincinnati, Ohio.* Organizes low-wage and immigrant workers to confront economic injustice in the workplace. www.cworkers.org

Deported Diaspora. *Boston, Massachusetts.* Multi-racial young organizers collaborate to prevent deportations and change the US deportation system. www.deporteddiaspora.org

DREAM in Action. *Boise, Idaho.* Uses direct organizing campaigns to build power and win campaigns for immigrant justice.

Fuerza Laboral - Power of Workers. *Central Falls, Rhode Island.* Empowers immigrant and low-income workers to achieve fair, equal and dignified working conditions. www.fuerza-laboral.org

Fuerza Unida. *San Antonio, Texas.* Empowers women workers and their families to achieve social, economic and environmental justice. www.lafuerzaunida.org

Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights. *Atlanta, Georgia.* Develops grassroots leaders in the Latino/a immigrant community who challenge racist and oppressive policies. www.glahr.org

Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees. *New York, New York.* Organizes with working class Haitian immigrants around economic justice and immigrant rights. www.haitianwomen.wordpress.com

Interfaith Center for Worker Justice. *Minneapolis, Minnesota.* Enables low-wage workers to organize for better wages and working conditions. www.workersinterfaith.org

Latin American and Caribbean Community Center. *Atlanta, Georgia.* Addresses the complexities stemming from global migration and economic disparities. www.lacccenter.org

Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates. *St. Louis, Missouri.* Organizes and advocates for the basic rights of all immigrants. www.mira-mo.org

Mujeres Unidas de Idaho. *Boise, Idaho.* Brings Latinas together to examine and take action on social justice issues affecting their community. www.mujeresunidasidaho.org

Peace Through Interamerican Community Action. *Bangor, Maine.* Engages in anti-sweatshop, labor rights and solidarity organizing. www.pica.ws

Portland Central America Solidarity Committee. *Portland, Oregon.* Mobilizes workers and students in the fight for human rights and justice in Latin America and in Oregon. www.pcasc.net

Restaurant Opportunities Center of Miami. *Miami, Florida.* Organizes restaurant workers for improved wages and working conditions. www.rocunited.com

Student/Farmworker Alliance. *Immokalee, Florida.* Students and youth who organize with farmworkers to eliminate sweatshop conditions and slavery in the fields. www.sfalliance.org

Student Immigrant Movement. *Boston, Massachusetts.* Builds the power of immigrant students by identifying, recruiting and developing leaders. www.simforus.com

Worker Center for Economic Justice. *Lynn, Mass.* Addresses the problems of low-wage, non-union immigrant worker exploitation.

Movement for Immigrant Rights

continued from page one

the criminal justice system as a "force-multiplier," a way to take the handcuffs off law enforcement. Never mind who and how we are putting the handcuffs on.

The immigrant rights movement needs to get with it. We are organized along the lines of Good and Bad. Immigrants deserve rights because they pick your tomatoes, not your pockets. They don't deserve rights because they are human. But the central crisis is precisely that, one of human rights. We are witnessing the emergence of what organizer Subhash Kateel once called Immigrant Apartheid. Immigration status is legal code for race. While you can't legally

discriminate between White and Colored, you can between citizen and non-citizen. After September 11, we all saw how migration status was used in Brooklyn to shatter the very institutions that allow people of color to rise above subsistence and form a middle class. We saw how the criminal courts were used in Postville, Iowa, site of a large workplace immigration raid, to turn Good undocumented workers into Bad criminal aliens.

If the problem is Immigrant Apartheid, and the right-wing strategy is devolution, then our strategy must be to make migration status less relevant. But the nation's largest immigrant rights campaign has done the exact opposite—falling into the trap of wedding immigrants' rights and dignity to legal status, and, worse

yet, trading that status for the rights and dignity of those left out of the deal. Since 2005, mainstream immigration advocates have pushed for Comprehensive Immigration Reform—a campaign built on the exchange of a bigger border wall, more deportation and devolution for limited legalization. Sage voices have criticized the campaign for monopolizing the debate when we could have been winning small and steady. State and federal laws are stripping Green Card holders of economic and legal rights, thereby devaluing the prize itself.

Since 2005, legislators who don't want any legalization have effectively blocked Comprehensive Immigration Reform from passing. Strangely enough, these

continued on page nine

Movement for Immigrant Rights

continued from page eight

hatters were our saving grace under Bush. But we can't rely on them much longer. Obama will effectively neutralize the Right's opposition. We have to take advantage of his strengths on defense, and move to offense. Our job is to make the impossible possible, and the possible inevitable.

Creating solidarity to win

If the mainstream is shorthand for those who count, we need to claim the mainstream as our own. Immigrant rights organizers can't settle for, or grow comfortable with, being in history's margins. We must spend less time criticizing the proposals on the table and more time translating our grassroots demands into legible policy. The Obama Administration has promised to take on Comprehensive Immigration Reform as soon as it finishes health care (which could mean four years or four months). Comprehensive Immigration Reform proponents try to scare those of us who won't benefit from the plan into keeping quiet, charging that if we raise our voices we will sabotage the greater good. But our "piecemeal" solutions benefit far more people than their "comprehensive" demand.

Two youth campaigns are models for what we must do more and better. The DREAM Act students are fighting to give undocumented high school graduates who were raised in the United States the right to pay in-state tuition for

college and get a Green Card (see "The Dreamwalkers," page 2). Their bill has more popular support than any other immigration proposal. The Child Citizen Protection Act, born from a movement in New York, would allow an immigration judge to consider the best interests of an American child before deporting a parent (see "The Plight of Jean Montrevil," page 5).

To expand progressive possibilities, the immigrant rights and criminal justice movements need to ally immediately. Everyone talks about Black/Brown solidarity.

In the progressive labor sector, that means we fight for the rights of all workers, across race and migration status. But Black/Brown solidarity hasn't translated into a meaningful platform for the victims of mass incarceration.

Learn from Black history. Criminal courts and jails were used to disenfranchise the Black community immediately after their wins in the Civil Rights

Movement. In 2006, our people rose into million strong marches in every corner of this country. While our strength was beautiful, our message was not. The most popular sign in those marches was "We Are Not Criminals." Technically, that's not true. We are criminals. An Arizona county prosecutor who is securing criminal convictions before sending defendants off to deportation explains, "The policy of requiring a felony conviction for any plea agreement is an important one... That conviction will harm their ability to immigrate here legally and become a citizen... In a sense, it is this office's

attempt to enforce a no-amnesty program." Meanwhile Homeland Security is tagging our youth as gang members, putting their names into databases that are more perma-

nent than tattoos. You can't "rehabilitate" yourself out.

What could Black/Brown solidarity against criminalization look like? It could mean ACORN, a respected (and now targeted) grassroots organization with a long history of civic engagement, joining forces with the young and robust National Day Laborer Organizing Network to unseat racist sheriffs who are terrorizing Black and Brown alike.

The alliance of immigrant rights and criminal justice is an explicitly Left inter-



An Army National Guard member stands watch on a ridge above Nogales, Arizona on the US border with Mexico. In recent years, the US has built more than 600 miles of barriers on the 2,000-mile border.

vention, not just a grassroots one. This is work we must do, work that does not feel safe for the Democratic Party (given its own tough-on-crime history). There are plenty of reasons it is more strategic (as Saul Alinsky would say) to organize to fix stop signs than to shut down prisons. You must come from a perspective of radical love and truth to understand the caging of our people as a form of violence that requires symbolic and material intervention.

Finally, we must intensify our direct action. In the real world, devolution looks like a war of attrition. Raids are like air bombs. They target communities, not specific people. Suddenly our people are afraid to walk the streets. Suddenly our ministers and English language teachers are raising bail bonds, visiting jailed congregants and students.

But amidst even the greatest despair, there is the brightest light. Arizona—where immigration and criminal law enforcement are fusing—is not just the nation's leading laboratory in devolution. It is Ground Zero in organized resistance. In Phoenix, indigenous spiritual leaders rallied citizens to physically hold the line against off-duty police who were trying to make day laborers stop seeking work in a parking lot near Home Depot. When White nationalist motorcyclists came driving by, hurling insults and physically pushing their weight into the stand off, the pro-immigrant side didn't budge. When Joe

continued on page ten

Movement for Immigrant Rights

continued from page nine

Arpaio, self-dubbed "America's Toughest Sheriff," brought his forces to arrest the day laborers, they still didn't fold. Instead they videotaped his abuse and called the *New York Times* editorial board. Suddenly elite newsreaders all over the world were reading about Sheriff Joe, and the paper found itself echoing the grassroots campaign's demand to stop him.

Make the path by walking

To be crystal clear: I am not advocating that we "open" the borders (the US has two). My point is that so long as immigration is a security issue, to be solved by hawks, jailers and others in the security game, we will never fix this broken system. We'll make it worse by multiplying error and injustice.

We need to take immigration out of the Department of Homeland Security and elevate it to a cabinet-level position that manages rather than polices migration. We need federal leadership that can hear and mediate the interests of a range of invested actors—from the day laborer to the business leader, teacher, priest, imam, sheriff and even foreign head of state.

The path to this solution is long and rocky. A vehicle we need to get there is muckraking journalism. Homeland Security holds onto information like a toddler clutches his toys. And most journalists—too pressed for time to penetrate the security information bubble—go by the government's press releases. Exposés are effective to tip people on the fence into our camp, move our side to deeper outrage and school us on the targets of our organizing. Investigative journalism is a dying field, but we need to re-invest in it. From Daniel Zwerdling's groundbreaking report on the death of Richard Rust in immigration custody to the *New York Times* exposé on detainee death three years later, popular awareness of prison gulags and congressional action (or inaction, depending on how you measure) has grown phenomenally.

The call for more investigators is part and parcel of a call for diversified expertise. In my years of organizing, I always wondered why people who want

to change the world go to law school. My field's over-saturation with lawyers messes up our game. For example, our policy experts are focused on the Judiciary Committee. In this moment of economic crisis, we need better ins with Appropriations. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the agency responsible for enforcing immigration laws under the Department of Homeland Security, is not a volunteer force. The money trail matters even more than the letter of the law. If we had more economists, business leaders and organizers, we'd have more angles into problem-solving.

Third, we must engage mid- and long-term in mass-based organizing. Visionary labor organizer Bhairavi Desai reflects, "Any issue that affects masses of people requires a mass solution." There are 2.3 million people locked up. Another 2 million have been deported in the last decade, all held in prisons and jails at some point. There's no shortage of a constituency. There are natural leaders who can anchor prison organizing, like jailhouse lawyers, hunger-strikers and families on the outside who are taking collect calls from their loved ones and other people's too. There's not yet any mass-based prisoner group in the country. If organizing is a field with rigorous methodology, we need to bring it to prisoner work. There are groups making inroads, but we need to talk across the board about how to build a mass base for this sector, which is distinct from labor.

Finally, we need movement vehicles to scale. I am not talking about think tanks that are just like the elite Manhattan Institute, only with our ideology. I mean open spaces of cultural and political transformation that are structured to be cross-issue, multi-generational, multi-regional, cross-disciplinary and, as a victorious Salvadoreña leader urges, spaces of *alegría* (profound joy and celebration). The Universal Negro Improvement Association, the Catholic Worker and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee stand out as historical models. We

need to adapt them to the 21st century. Corporations went transnational a long time ago, but our institutions have resisted crossing borders, out of deference to state boundaries that are pretty porous after all.

Conclusion

History has put the immigrant rights movement in a bind. Our young country used to have a quota system that in

You must come from a perspective of radical love and truth to understand the caging of our people as a form of violence that requires symbolic and material intervention.

practice excluded non-Europeans. In 1965, quotas were opened to Asian and African nations because Congress was pressured by a robust Civil Rights Movement and needed to look good to the world in the midst of the Cold War. But universalizing quotas did not mean

ending them. Numerical limits to the number of people who could come here stayed. Illegality became the central problem of federal immigration policy. Mexicans became the illegals. Thus illegal immigration became, in the words of movement historian Mai Ngai, an "impossible subject... a social reality and a legal impossibility... a person who cannot be and a problem that cannot be solved."

Today, 45 years later, legalization is the most popular cry of the immigrant working poor. With the nightmare of deportation ever present, it's no wonder that our people's first hope for change is amnesty under Obama. But given the reality of deportation and devolution—which is making migration status relevant in every waking and even sleeping moment—legalization is becoming less and less strategic. Throwing people over the legal/illegal line doesn't solve the fact that the non-citizen/citizen divide is deepening.

Aarti Shahani is an organizer and political commentator. She co-founded and for five years co-directed Families for Freedom, the nation's first defense network run by and for immigrants facing deportation. Aarti is an adjunct professor at New York University and a researcher with Justice Strategies. A version of this article appeared on Organizing Upgrade, www.organizingupgrade.org.

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Inside this issue:
Fixing a broken immigration
system & remembering Zinn



Meet RESIST

GRANT RECIPIENTS

RESIST awards grants six times a year to groups throughout the United States engaged in organizing for social, economic and racial justice. In this issue of the Newsletter we list a few grant recipients from our most recent allocation cycle in February of 2010. For more information, visit the RESIST website at www.resistinc.org or contact the groups directly.

ADAPT-Colorado

201 South Cherokee Street, Denver,
Colorado 80223. www.adapt.org

ADAPT is a national grassroots community that organizes disability rights activists to engage in nonviolent direct action to assure the civil and human rights of people with disabilities so that they may live in freedom. There's no place like home, and ADAPT-Colorado and other local chapters fight so people with disabilities can live in the community with real supports instead of being locked away in nursing homes and other institutions.

A \$3,000 Accessibility Grant from RESIST will help ADAPT-Colorado members attend a Washington, DC disability rights activist gathering and action in April.

Fort Hood Support Network

PO Box 16174, Austin, Texas 78761.
www.underthehoodcafe.org

Texas' Fort Hood Support Network operates Under the Hood Cafe, a place for soldiers to gather, relax and speak freely about the wars and the military. Support services for soldiers include referrals for counseling, legal advice and information on GI rights. Since its founding in 2007, the cafe has also become a refuge for soldiers who are refusing to deploy—or are thinking about it.

RESIST's grant of \$3,000 will help the Fort Hood Support Network continue their outreach and support work to active duty soldiers looking for alternatives.

Justice Committee

PO Box 1885 New York, New York
10159. www.thejusticecommittee.org

A Latin@-led organization, the Justice Committee works to build a movement against police violence and systemic racism in New York City. The committee emphasizes the leadership development of both youth and elders. Mem-

bers offer Cop Watch trainings and work closely with victims of police violence and their families.

A RESIST grant of \$3,000 will allow the Justice Committee, a volunteer-led organization, to continue to build an anti-racist movement to end police violence.

Rhode Island Jobs with Justice

280 Broadway, Suite 201, Providence,
Rhode Island 02903. www.jwj.org

Rhode Island Jobs with Justice is a coalition of labor, community, faith-based and student groups taking concrete action to level the playing field by building power for poor and working class people. Working to re-establish justice in the workplace, Rhode Island Jobs with Justice promotes social, racial and economic justice and demands an end to corporate greed and economic inequality.

A RESIST Multi-Year Grant of \$3,000 will allow Rhode Island Jobs with Justice to continue organizing with grocery store workers, supporting binding arbitration for local teachers, protecting hotel workers from layoffs and working for immigrant rights.